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ABSTRACT

One hundred and seven supervising teachers and 143 student teachers were administered a set of 42 criteria to determine if they perceived the performance of 15 university supervisors differently. Student teachers were more concerned with the regularity and nature of visits by the university supervisors and the specific assistance they were able to provide than were their supervising teachers. A comparison of the ratings of 10 undergraduate assistants with five regular faculty members serving as university supervisors indicated that there is little difference between the two groups in the performance of supervisory tasks. (Author)

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An Investigation of the Effectiveness of Graduate Assistants and Faculty Serving as University Supervisors of Student Teachers

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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ABSTRACT

Supervising teachers (N = 107) and student teachers (N = 143) were administered a set of 42 criteria to determine if they perceived the performance of university supervisors (N = 15) differently. Student teachers were more concerned with the regularity and nature of visits by the university supervisors and the specific assistance they were able to provide than were their supervising teachers. A comparison of the ratings of graduate assistants (N = 10) with regular faculty (N = 5) serving as university supervisors indicated that there is little difference between the two groups in the performance of supervisory tasks.

An Investigation of the Effectiveness of Graduate Assistants and Faculty Serving as University Supervisors of Student Teachers

The ways in which teachers for the public schools of America are prepared are often subject to severe and prolonged criticism. Amid the controversies regarding teacher education, there is one area in which consensus exists--the importance of student teaching. Ever since the establishment of the first teacher education school of which there is any record, student teaching has been an important part of the preparation program (1). While student teaching was primarily a function of the laboratory school there was little need for a university supervisor. With the rapid expansion of enrollments in teacher education in the late forties and early fifties and the use of public school classrooms to provide more realistic settings for professional laboratory experiences, the need for university supervision became apparent. Today, the preparing institution is expected to provide supervision but the effectiveness of this supervision, like many aspects of teacher preparation, is frequently the subject of controversy (2).

The ineffectiveness of university supervision is often attributed to such factors as faculty overload, professors preferring to remain on campus to teach and publish, inadequate funding, ambivalence about the role of the supervisor, lack of cooperation among various departments involved in the teacher preparation program, lack of adequate preparation of faculty for supervisory roles, and the lack of specific tasks on which effectiveness can be determined. One approach to dealing with some of these problems is the use of carefully selected graduate

assistants as part of the supervisory team.

Since the university supervisor is so universally considered to be a member of the faculty, an extensive review of the literature revealed no studies relating to the use or effectiveness of graduate assistants as university supervisors of student teachers. There are however, various studies which seem to indicate that the effectiveness of faculty who serve as university supervisors is limited to a relatively small number of roles as opposed to the performance of specific supervisory tasks. Perhaps it is not that supervisors are ineffective but simply, as Yee(3) suggests, that we know so little about what really matters in student teaching.

Morris' (4) study sought evidence about the effects of the university supervisor on the performance and adjustment of student teachers. One group of student teachers received university supervision while another group received no university supervision. She concluded that there was no significant difference between the classroom performance and adjustment of student teachers in the two groups.

Spivey (5) and Beaumont (6) studied the effectiveness of the specialist and generalist in providing supervisory services for student teachers. Spivey concluded that the generalist approach provided significantly more supervision and helped student teachers to meet their needs to a significantly greater degree than did the subject area specialist supervisor. Beaumont found no significant difference between the effectiveness of the generalist and subject area specialist as perceived by student teachers, supervising teachers, and administrators in the various roles the supervisor is expected to

perform and that administrative decision involving the preferred use of one type of supervisor over another was not warranted.

Scholl (7) and McElroy (8), using the critical incident technique, studied the effective and ineffective practices of college supervisors as perceived by supervising teachers and student teachers. Scholl found approximately 57 percent of the supervisory behaviors reported were considered to be effective to some degree. In McElroy's study, 54 different supervisory practices were identified. Twenty-six of these practices were effective and 28 were ineffective.

Johnson (9) suggests that the reasons for the perceived ineffectiveness of college supervisors is because they are not performing the functions in their role according to their own expectation and the expectations of the supervising and student teachers. Another explanation may be in the differences in roles as perceived by the significant persons (student teacher, supervising teacher, university supervisor) involved and the difference between the meaning associated with role as opposed to the performance of specific supervisory tasks

PURPOSES

The purposes of this study were:

1. To identify specific supervisory tasks the university supervisory was expected to perform and which supervising teachers and student teachers believed to be important.
2. To determine if there was a significant difference between student teacher's and supervising teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of university supervisors.
3. To determine if there was a significant difference between

student teachers' and supervising teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of graduate assistants and faculty serving as university supervisors.

SUBJECTS AND PROCEDURES

The subjects in this study consisted of 143 elementary and secondary student teachers, 107 supervising teachers, 10 graduate assistants serving as university supervisors, and 5 faculty members serving as university supervisors. Graduate assistants were full-time students enrolled in a program of study leading to the master's or doctor's degree in educational curriculum and instruction. Each graduate assistant was carefully selected on the basis of teaching experience in public schools, recommendations from their supervising principals, and their ability to communicate effectively and establish rapport quickly as determined through a selective interview. Each graduate assistant selected participated in an orientation program designed to develop entry level competencies (sets of knowledge, skills, and attitudes) believed to be essential in performing the various supervisory tasks. Periodically, group sessions relating to problems and concerns in supervision were conducted. Graduate assistants held frequent individual conferences with the coordinator of field experiences to identify supervisory techniques and procedures which would be most appropriate in specific situations. One graduate assistant supervisor had completed a course designed for supervisors of student teachers.

The five faculty supervisors can be categorized as follows:

1. Two were part-time supervisors and their responsibilities

were restricted to the supervision of student teachers. One supervised 18 elementary student teachers and one supervised 15 secondary student teachers. Both held the master's degree and had extensive teaching experience. The secondary supervisor had served in this position for three semesters. The elementary supervisor had no previous experience in supervision of student teachers.

2. Three faculty supervisors held the earned doctorate, had extensive experience in public school and university teaching, and supervision of student teachers. In addition to supervision of student teachers, they taught a course and performed administrative responsibilities related to student teaching as well as serving on university and department committees.

of the student teachers involved in this study, 73 were supervised by faculty and 70 were supervised by graduate assistants.

During a workshop for elementary and secondary supervising teachers, 137 participants responded to the following question: "What are the criteria by which you judge the effectiveness of the university supervisor?" The responses were carefully studied and seven categories were identified. The resulting categories were: (1) teaching experience, (2) availability, (3) conferencing, (4) human relations, (5) evaluation, (6) expectations of the student teacher, and (7) communications. Within each category, responses were utilized to identify descriptors of specific supervisory behaviors appropriate to the category. The categories and descriptors are shown in Table 1.

Near the end of a semester of student teaching, supervising

teachers were again participating in in-service sessions for the purpose of evaluating selected parts of the student teaching program and identifying needs for the next year. The criteria for judging the effectiveness of university supervisors developed several months previously were presented. After discussion of the criteria, supervising teachers were asked to (1) rate the university supervisor with whom they were working on each criterion, and (2) indicate how necessary each criterion was for effective supervision. During the student teaching seminar conducted on-campus at the conclusion of student teaching, student teachers rated their university supervisors on each criterion and indicated the importance of each criterion for effective supervision.

Insert Table 1 about here

There were <u>two</u> ratings for each of the items relating to performance of the supervisor. First, each criterion statement within the category supervisory performance was indicated by <u>yes</u> or <u>no</u> and for purposes of analysis, <u>yes = 1</u> and <u>no = 2</u>. Second, the necessity of each criteria for effective supervision was rated on a scale of 1 (very necessary) to 5 (very un-necessary).

FINDINGS

The first concern was the validity of the 42 criterion items for judging the effectiveness of supervision. Analysis showed a mean

range of ratings on the 5 point scale of from 1.21 to 1.78 with a mean rating of 1.37 by the group of supervising teachers. The ratings by student teachers ranged from 1.15 to 1.88 with a mean rating of 1.45. These results indicate that all items were considered to be necessary and serve as a valid basis for judging the effectiveness of the university supervisor.

In order to determine whether or not there were differences in the performance of the university supervisors as perceived by the student teachers and supervising teachers, the differences between means were tested with a two-tailed t test. Significant differences were found on eleven items and these are identified in Table 1.

In examining the eleven items on which responses of supervising teachers and student teachers differed significantly, eight of the items showed higher mean ratings by the supervising teachers. Supervising teachers rated university supervisors significantly higher on making regular visits to the classroom (item 4), conducting conferences with the supervising teacher and student teacher (items 8 and 9) establishing and maintaining good rapport with the supervising teacher and student teacher (item 14), observing at regular intervals for evaluating purposes (item 23), using performance as the primary basis for evaluation (item 33), and serving as a communication link between the student teacher, supervising teacher and university supervisor (item 40). It is difficult to account for these differences in perception. It may be that the differences are primarily a result of growth and development as a teacher. Student teachers are in the process of becoming professionals, have higher anxiety levels because of their position, and need more frequent assurances that their

performance is satisfactory than do supervising teachers.

Three items showed significantly higher mean ratings by the student teachers. Student teachers perceived their university supervisor as suggesting appropriate modifications of teaching and classroom management techniques (item 29), making specific recommendations for improving their teaching (item 31), and suggesting alternatives for implementing recommendations (item 32), more often than did supervising teachers. These differences may be contributed to a lack of communication between supervising teachers and university supervisors. In practice, university supervisors' suggestions and recommendations are more detailed to the student teachers than to supervising teachers.

The criterion items were also examined to determine if there was a relationship between the ratings and the status of the university supervisor (graduate assistant vs. regular faculty). The analysis is also shown in Table 1 and reveals a significant mean difference for only three items. Student teachers and supervising teachers indicated that graduate assistants serving as university supervisors gave advance notice of visits (item 6), conducted a conference with the student teacher during each visit (item 8), and clearly communicated requirements and performance expectations to the student teacher and supervising teacher (item 37) to a significantly greater degree than did faculty serving as university supervisors. While there is wide disagreement among supervisors about giving advanced notice of visits, student teachers find this a source of security and supervising teachers find it helpful for planning purposes. Communicating clearly what is expected of student teachers and conducting conferences for providing feedback and recommendations are essential supervisory tasks.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicated that the items selected to rate the performance of university supervisors were valid criteria. Ratings of university supervisors by supervising teachers and student teachers were significant for eleven of the 42 items. Ratings on eight items favored the supervising teachers and three items favored the student teachers. Student teachers were more concerned with the regularity and nature of supervisory visits and the specific assistance which university supervisors were able to supply than were their supervising teachers. Finally, the relationship between ratings and the status of the university supervisor (graduate assistant vs. regular faculty) showed little difference in the performance of the university supervisors. These results indicate that graduate assistants, when carefully selected, provided preparation and supportive supervision, and when their academic and supervisory loads are reasonable, can function effectively in the role of supervisors of student teachers. Institutions utilizing graduate assistant as supervisors of student teachers should conduct similar studies so that a knowledge base against which decisions relating to their use can be judged.

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Table 1. Analysis of Criterion Items Used in Evaluation of University Supervisors

Item	Student Teachers $\bar{X}$	SD	Supervising Teachers $\bar{X}$	SD	Diff.
Category I: Teaching Experience					
1. Has had successful teaching experience.	1.13	.49	1.27	.68	-.14
2. Has had successful teaching experience in the area and at the level he/she is supervising.	1.58	.84	1.61	.85	-.03
3. Is well prepared in content and teaching methods for supervision in these teaching areas and levels.	1.39	.74	1.46	.79	-.07
Category II: Availability					
4. Made regular visits to my classroom.	1.16	.41	1.03	.17	+.13*
5. Made additional visits when needed or requested.	1.19	.90	1.48	.84	+.21
6. Gave advance notice of some visits	1.03	.18	1.04	.19	-.01*
7. Provided you and the student teacher with specific directions for communicating between visits (phone number, address, etc.).	1.10	.37	1.14	.44	-.04
Category III: Conferencing					
8. Conducted a conference with the student teacher during each visit.	1.22	.45	1.10	.39	+.12*

Table 1. (continued)

Item	Student Teachers $\bar{X}$	SD	Supervising Teachers $\bar{X}$	SD	Diff
9. Conducted a conference with me (supervising teacher) during each visit.	1.36	.62	1.17	.38	+.19*
10. Scheduled sufficient time for the conference.	1.22	.53	1.21	.49	+.01
11. Based the conference primarily on observation of teaching performance.	1.0	.44	1.04	.23	+.06
12. Based the conference primarily on expectations of the student teacher.	1.29	.63	1.37	.71	-.08
13. Based the conference primarily on constructive feedback of the student teacher's performance	1.08	.37	1.11	.42	-.03
Category IV: Human Relations					
14. Established and maintained good rapport with me (supervising teacher) and the student teacher.	1.15	.47	1.03	.22	+.12*
15. Showed genuine concern for the student teacher, supervising teacher, and the students.	1.10	.39	1.05	.29	+.06
16. Showed genuine interest in student teaching.	1.03	.20	1.04	.23	-.01
17. Was tactful in speech and action.	1.08	.34	1.02	.19	+.06
18. Displayed a pleasing personality.	1.06	.32	1.05	.29	+.01

Table 1. (continued)

Item	Student Teachers $\bar{X}$	SD	Supervising Teachers $\bar{X}$	SD	Diff.
19. Demonstrated leadership took the initative without being "pushy".	1.10	.38	1.11	.40	-.01
20. Was consistent in his/her requirements.	1.13	.45	1.15	.47	-.02
21. Placed the needs of students in our school on the same level as those of the student teacher	1.45	.82	1.33	.70	+.12
22. His/her personal grooming and dress was in accordance with standards commonly applied to teachers in this school.	1.01	.12	1.02	.14	-.01
Category V: Evaluation					
A. Observation of classroom teaching					
23. Observed at regular intervals.	1.25	.50	1.10	.36	+.15*
24. Observed for a substained period, at least a full period in the secondary classroom and a teaching episode or activity at the elementary level.	1.09	.33	1.07	.30	+.02
25. Observed in different classes and/or teaching situations.	1.13	.39	1.10	.36	+.03
26. Observed at different times of the day.	1.14	.40	1.12	.33	+.02

Table 1. (continued)

Item	Student Teachers $\bar{X}$	SD	Supervising Teachers $\bar{X}$	SD	Diff
B. Constructive Criticism					
27. Provided oral and written feedback about the student teacher's performance.	1.06	.26	1.10	.39	-.04
28. Used a positive approach.	1.05	.27	1.05	.25	.00
29. Suggested appropriate modifications of teaching and classroom management techniques.	1.11	.41	1.28	.64	-.17*
30. Was pratical and realistic in his/her recommendations.	1.16	.49	1.13	.46	+.03
31. Made specific recommendations.	1.14	.47	1.28	.63	-.14*
32. Suggested alternatives for implementing recommendations.	1.22	.57	1.41	.71	-.19*
C. Objectivity					
33. Uses performance as the primary basis for evaluation.	1.31	.68	1.15	.47	+.16*
34. Uses observation in varied teaching situations as the primary indicator of performance.	1.33	.65	1.21	.56	+.12
35. Uses recorded data (checklists, observation notes, notes from conferences with supervising teacher, written lesson plans, written unit plans) as basis for recommendations.	1.40	.74	1.25	.63	+.15

Table 1. (continued)

Item	Student Teachers $\bar{X}$	SD	Supervising Teachers $\bar{X}$	SD	Diff
36. Identified specific weaknesses.	1.22	.56	1.31	.69	-.09
Category VI: Expectations					
37. Clearly communicated, orally and in writing his/her requirements and performance expectations to the student teacher and supervising teacher.	1.25	.54	1.21	.50	+.04*
38. Made appropriate adjustments in expectations and requirements to accomodate the needs of the student teacher and teaching situation.	1.26	.62	1.19	.55	+.07
39. Set high standards for the student teacher.	1.45	.83	1.20	.52	+.15*
Category VII: Communications					
40. Established and maintained channels of communications	1.12	.38	1.07	.36	+.05*
41. Served as a communications link between the student teacher, supervising teacher, and the university supervisor.	1.39	.58	1.14	.46	+.25**
42. Was straightforward but tactful	1.14	.47	1.08	.39	+.06

*p .05
**p .01